

A Specialized Yoga Handbook to Build Self-Regulation and Aid Transitions in the Go  
Girls Program.

Tiffany Touchette, B.ECE

Department of Graduate and Undergraduate  
Studies In Education

Submitted in particular fulfillment  
of the requirements for the degree of  
Master of Education

Faculty of Education, Brock University  
St. Catharines, Ontario

© Tiffany M. Touchette, 2017

## **Abstract**

*Go Girls: Healthy Bodies, Healthy Minds, A Specialized Yoga Handbook For Mentors* is designed for mentors to implement a specialized yoga practice into each mentoring session as a way to enhance adolescent females' self-regulation development and to assist them during transitions back to regular school structures. The intentions of the handbook were to provide mentors with simple, easy to follow lesson plans to use nearing the end of each session to encourage mindfulness among the group. The handbook offers a five-session lesson plan that is to be used as a cool-down exercise to conclude each Go Girls session. The girls will learn a variety of skills through mindful yoga practice. Throughout this unit, the girls will learn general objectives, breathing technique, and basic standing and balancing poses, and they will lead fellow peers through their created yoga sequence. By the end of this experience, the girls will be able to perform their own yoga sequences and reflect on the “why, how, and so what” of yoga, so that they can continue to incorporate yoga into their daily lives. The project began with a comprehensive examination of current literature surrounding the use of yoga with adolescent populations. Through the literature review, and from personal and professional experience, it became apparent that yoga practice with adolescent populations has numerous personal, physical, and psychological benefits.

## Table of Contents

	Page
Abstract	i
CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION TO THE STUDY	1
Personal Connection	3
Background of the Problem	6
Statement of the Problem Context	7
Purpose of the Study	7
Objectives of the Handbook	8
Theoretical Framework	8
Scope and Limitations of the Study	11
Outline of Remainder of the Document	12
CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW	14
Theoretical Perspectives	14
Growth and Development in Female Adolescents	16
Yoga as an Eastern-Movement Discipline	18
Yoga and Physical Health	20
Yoga and Mental Health	22
Summary of the Chapter	25
CHAPTER THREE: METHODOLOGY	26
CHAPTER FOUR: THE HANDBOOK	29
CHAPTER FIVE: EVALUATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS	83
Implications for Practice	83
Implications for Theory	85
Future Research	86
References	88

## **CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION TO THE STUDY**

This is a handbook designed to be a practical tool for Go Girls mentors to implement a specialized child-centered yoga program to assist adolescent females alleviate high energy levels nearing the end of each session. This handbook was designed (a) to assist adolescent females within the program to transition with ease, (b) to experience a calming program that promotes self-regulation, and (c) to provide an alternative form of physical activity to support personal, physical, and psychological health. In Canada and internationally, childhood physical inactivity, sedentary behaviours, and obesity are becoming serious public health concerns (Benavides & Caballero, 2009; Ontario Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care, 2016; Whitehead & Biddle, 2008). The Canadian Society for Exercise Physiology's (2012) current recommendations suggest that adolescents aged 12-17 should participate in at least 60 minutes of moderate to vigorous physical activity per day. In 2007, only 50% of adolescent populations in Ontario, aged 12 years and older, reported physical activities that ranged from active to moderately active (Ontario Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care, 2016). This finding suggests that the remaining 50% of adolescents live an inactive lifestyle. Inactivity in childhood has been connected to cardiovascular risk factors and other health-related consequences into adulthood (Benavides & Caballero, 2009; Ross & Thomas, 2010; Whitehead & Biddle, 2008). Similarly, Whitehead and Biddle (2008) concluded that only half of adolescent females in their study actually achieved the set guideline of 60 minutes of daily physical activity.

Obesity rates among children and adolescent populations have been rising within the last 2 decades (Ontario Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care, 2016; Whitehead &

Biddle, 2008). This rise in obesity among adolescent females can be linked to social influences as well as cultural norms (Whitehead & Biddle, 2008). Whitehead & Biddle found that adolescent females held “strong stereotypical views regarding what constituted feminine or unfeminine appearance and actions amongst themselves and their peers.” (p. 246). In this study, female populations did not want to get overly involved with physical activities that would compromise their femininity or that would prompt others to think of them differently. These concerns about appearance have influenced adolescent females to be less active. Another influence stems from 21<sup>st</sup> century culture. Technology has become easily accessible to adolescent populations thereby; this access to technology has reduced physical activity in adolescent populations and has increased the amount of time that children spend in front of a screen (Whitehead & Biddle, 2008). A physically active lifestyle can directly benefit an individual’s physical and mental health, which reduces illness and disorders (Bluth & Blanton, 2014; Ontario Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care, 2016; Ross & Thomas, 2010; Spinazzola, Rhodes, Emerson, Earle, & Monroe, 2011). The introduction of alternative forms of physical activity, such as mindfulness in childhood and adolescence, is vital for establishing early health and wellness habits that can be continued throughout one’s lifespan.

Go Girls is a group mentoring program that was developed in 2006 by Big Brothers Big Sisters Canada. The program seeks to utilize a philosophy of instilling healthy body and healthy minds in adolescent females (Big Brothers Big Sisters, 2011). The program is executed in select schools within the Niagara Region. The logistics of the program involves seven mentoring sessions, typically 1 hour in length, and all sessions are held over a 7-10 week timeframe. The program is intended to aid adolescent females,

aged 11-14, to better understand who they are as individuals by accepting that, in life, they will be faced with challenges and struggles that they must overcome in order to be successful. The program goal is to create a supportive and safe environment where each participant is able to gain an appreciation of self through engagement of physical activity, discussions of balanced nutrition, and open communication of life struggles, personal interests, and strengths.

### **Personal Connection**

My continuous interest in physical activity and alternative forms stems from my childhood and has flourished throughout my academic career. Being the youngest of four siblings, and of those, the only female, has provided me with many challenges, but also many accomplishments. Throughout my childhood and into adolescence, I constantly attempted to participate in any sport, exercise, or game in which my older siblings were engaged. My father instilled into our family the importance of being active regardless of age. He would take us on lengthy bike rides, take us ice-skating, or simply play with us in the backyard. All of my siblings and I were registered in extracurricular activities growing up. In fact, my father even constructed a balance beam in the backyard so that I could practice my gymnastics at home. Needless to say, my family believes in living a healthy, active lifestyle, and that value has been instilled into me.

Early in my first year of the early childhood education program, I began writing about physical exercise and activity whenever possible. In fact, during my first semester behavioural intervention course, I was asked to design and implement a behaviour modification plan geared toward changing a behaviour in oneself. At this time I was still adjusting to the student life; therefore, I was not very physically active. My treatment

plan was to modify my physical inactivity and go to the gym 'x' amount of days per week. I created a baseline data sheet using an antecedent, behaviour, and consequence (ABC) chart. The behaviour modification plan was a success and I was able to maintain my set goals by managing my time more efficiently. The reason I selected this behaviour to modify was because I realized the importance that being physical active plays in life.

During my second term in the program, I had a health and nutrition course where we discussed issues and topics relating to health and wellness of all ages and developmental stages in Canada. The course linked nutrition and physical activity as being significant factors in promoting and maintaining health and preventing disease. There was a personal self-analysis of food choices and a physical activity assignment. The assignment was to log my eating and physical activity for a 5-day period, link those choices to Canada's recommended guidelines, identify goals for success, and analyze the success and barriers experienced. I enjoyed this assignment because it is important to reflect on your choices and work towards better options when considering your overall health and well-being.

My second year of the early childhood education program was when I was able to use my passion for physical activity, learned theories, and philosophies, and put this knowledge into practice. During my first placement, I was introduced to yoga practice with children. The kindergarten teacher had flashcards of various poses that she would get the children to do. The group seemed to really enjoy attempting the poses, and that is when I decided I would implement a creative movement yoga practice within my subsequent placements. As an early childhood educator, it is important to ensure you are introducing children to activities that are age appropriate. My research at the time

suggested that yoga for early years should incorporate animal-themed poses with a laying still pose to calm the body and mind. My placements varied from toddler programs to primary schools. To my knowledge, the children from all placements seemed to enjoy their alternative physical activity experience.

Early in my undergraduate studies at Brock University in the early childhood education program, I participated in an internship program. For this internship, I wanted to take the opportunity to explore yoga with an older age group. This is when I began my volunteer/mentoring experience with the Big Brothers Big Sisters, Thorold organization in the Go Girls and In-School Mentoring programs. I selected this organization and programs (a) to challenge myself, (b) to expand my knowledge of child development into adolescent populations, and (c) to understand who I am as a university student, an early childhood educator, and an individual in today's 21<sup>st</sup> century culture.

It has been 4 years that I have been an active mentor in the Go Girls program, and during this time I have noticed a behavioural pattern. Most girls in the program tend to exhibit high energy levels when transitioning, which disrupts the flow of regular school structures. Throughout my undergraduate studies, I developed a specialized yoga component for the Go Girls program as an alternative form of physical activity to combat this pattern.

Outside of academia, I have engaged in yoga practice through the use of at-home videos and taken classes for several years in order to get personally acquainted with yoga. I believe that all forms of physical activity play important roles for physical and mental health. For the purpose of this research, I believe that yoga practice with female adolescent populations can play a crucial role in allowing them to explore their bodies,



recognize how their bodies move, and develop a mind-body connection to oneself, others, and the world. This connection is fundamental for development of self-regulation skills and abilities in adolescent females.

### **Background of the Problem**

I have observed through first-hand experience in the Go Girls program that the girls tend to demonstrate high energy levels throughout the mentoring sessions, particularly near the end of each session. To reduce this behaviour, a specialized yoga handbook within each Go Girls sessions can provide an alternative calming physical activity practice before transitioning back to their regular school day.

Adolescence is a challenging time period in an individual's life. An individual may experience a rapid series of developmental changes including those that are physical, mental, and emotional (Bluth & Blanton, 2014). These changes have been found to impact an adolescent female's individual growth and development (Sneed, Whitbourne, & Culang, 2006). In addition, one's social interactions and environment become strong influences in building decision making, self-esteem, and self-regulation (Leu, 2008). An individual's current psychosocial stage and ecological surroundings play significant roles in developing her ability to be receptive; that is, to be self-aware so that the individual is able to accept continuous change of emotions and thoughts (Hussain, 2015). Another influence hindering adolescents' ability to self-regulate is their exposure to mental, physical, and emotional stressors in daily life (Bluth & Blanton, 2014; Conboy, Noggle, Frey, Kudesia, & Khalsa, 2013). Yoga practice as an alternative approach can be a powerful instrument through which an individual confronts her inner self and begins to recognize the effect on her embodied experience (Douglass, 2010). Becoming familiar

with her own mental response through exploration of yoga practice allows an individual to develop conscious awareness of self in which she is better equipped to respond to her own thoughts and actions.

### **Statement of the Problem Context**

Physical activity, at all ages, is essential for the development and maintenance of a healthy and active lifestyle. Over time, if an individual continues to have limited physical activity, she is more likely to become obese (Whitehead & Biddle, 2008). In recent years, there has been an increase in the number of obese adolescent females (Ontario Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care, 2016; Whitehead & Biddle, 2008). It is important for adolescent females to be exposed to alternative forms of physical activity in order to stimulate interest in their wellness and establish early health habits.

Today's culture is constantly immersed in technological stimulations; therefore, it is crucial to educate individuals on the power of relaxing the mind. Adolescent populations are found to be one of the most stressed age groups (Santas, 2016). The relevance of providing opportunities for adolescents to manage and alleviate this perceived stress is important to an individual's mental and physical health. Furthermore, introducing adolescent females to mind-body forms of physical activity, such as yoga and mindfulness, can promote self-awareness, boost self-esteem, and foster self-regulation abilities.

### **Purpose of the Study**

The purpose of this study was to develop a handbook specifically designed for Go Girls mentors (a) to assist adolescent females within the program to transition with ease, (b) to implement a calm and effective program that promotes self-regulation, and (c) to

disseminate the use of yoga with adolescent populations, as an additional component in a child's life for personal, physical, and psychological health. The incorporation of alternative forms of physical activity, such as mindfulness found within yoga practice, can be advantageous in those crucial final moments of each Go Girls session. A mindfulness practice allows an individual to develop awareness of self in which she is able to be receptive to her own thoughts and feelings in a given moment without judgment (Bluth & Blanton, 2014, Handley & Earls, 2014). By becoming proficient in mindfulness practices, an individual can purposefully remain in the current moment through monitoring and controlling her intrusive thoughts (Handley & Earls, 2014). Consequently, an individual who practices mindfulness in learning how to regulate her attention in a given moment also develops openness and acceptance. In doing so, mindfulness yoga promotes cognitive processes and awareness that aid in one's ability to unify the self. Furthermore, yoga practice enhances exploration of individual identity and emotional health in which self-regulatory skills can be developed. This handbook will provide recommendations for a specialized yoga program (a) to assist adolescent females in the program through transitionary periods, (b) to enhance their self-regulatory skills, and (c) to help them see yoga practice as an alternative approach to physical activity.

### **Objectives of the Handbook**

The research objectives were framed to assist female adolescents to alleviate high energy levels during transitions by incorporating a mind-body philosophy to build on their self-regulatory skills and abilities. The following are the research objectives that underpin this handbook:

1. To provide opportunities for mentors to assist adolescent females through

transitory periods.

2. To assist mentors in the planning and execution of a calm and effective program that promotes self-regulation.
3. To promote the use of yoga within adolescent populations, as an additional element in a child's life for personal, physical and mental health.

This is an important area of study because of the increase in public concern over adolescents' physical inactivity and current physical and mental health. With an alarming number of children and adolescents being overweight, health and physical activity must be considered. It is important to provide children and adolescents with alternative forms of physical and mental health activity to assist them in establishing an early healthy lifestyle.

### **Theoretical Framework**

This study is guided by three models: Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Systems Theory; Bandura's Social Cognitive Theory; and Zimmerman's Self-Regulation Theory. These theories aided in situating and informing this research study, which also helped develop a multifaceted approach toward understanding the importance of influences in the environment that can foster or hinder the overall development of adolescents.

The first theoretical premise that assisted in informing this project was Urie Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Theory. The theory contributes to the notion of furthering self-regulation by allowing children to accurately understand the world around them and engage with others so that they can begin to shape their own future. Human development involves the process in which an individual develops a more complex understanding of an ecological environment (Leonard, 2011). Bronfenbrenner's ecological systems theory

considers influences on five environmental systems: the microsystem, the mesosystem, the exosystem, the macrosystem, and the chronosystem (Abrams, Theberge, & Karan, 2005).

These systems are meant to assist the understanding of how to support and guide human growth. They range from the microsystem, which refers to the relationship between children and their immediate environment, such as family, school, friends, and community, to the chronosystem, which refers to the environmental events and transitions over an individual's lifetime (Abrams et al., 2005). The microsystem is where children develop and live their daily lives (Leonard, 2011). Children enter the world with different physical traits and unique styles of interacting with others. It is important to acknowledge that children engage not only with immediate environments, but also through interactions between other systems that have an impact on a child's development (Leonard, 2011; Leu, 2008). Therefore, it's crucial for adolescent females to gain a sense of belonging in their ecological surroundings in order to build on self-awareness and emotional well-being.

The second premise that informed this study is based on Albert Bandura's Social Cognitive theory of self-regulation. This theory contributes to the concept that self-regulation skills derive from underlying processes. Children have the capability to discover factors within social environments that impact their emotional well-being throughout daily experiences (Bandura, 1991). Similarly, by altering typical patterns in the Go Girls sessions, the girls can gain an enhanced understanding of how their thinking and attitudes affect their emotional response, level of motivation, and their overall performance (Bandura, 1991). Relevant to Bandura's theory, Barry Zimmerman's Self-

Regulation Theory refers to the belief of what a person can do rather than personal judgments regarding one's physical or personal attributes. Children have the competence to reflect cognitively towards personal performance within a given task or activity (Zimmerman & Cleary, 2006). These attributions are important because they encourage adaptive changes of self-adjustments to how children learn and perceive the world around them.

These theoretical underpinnings suggest the importance of understanding that children not only engage with their immediate environment but also through interactions with other systems, and their impact on child development. Creating an environment that is safe to engage with others and explore the world around them is vital towards giving children the essential tools to further their development and gain a sense of self (Leonard, 2011; Leu, 2008; Sneed et al., 2006). These theories underscore the interconnectedness between children's experiences and their development of physical and psychological well-being. These theories also suggest the importance of implementing practices, such as mindfulness and yoga within the Go Girls program, that create opportunities for children to gain an understanding of how their thinking and attitudes affect them and work towards gaining self-regulatory perspectives (Bandura, 1991; Zimmerman & Cleary, 2006).

### **Scope and Limitations of the Study**

There are several limitations to this handbook that should be recognized. This handbook aims (a) to assist mentors in aiding adolescent females to transition, (b) to promote self-regulation development through the use of calm and effective programming, and (c) to promote an alternative form of physical activity in their lives. The intentions

for the handbook are to provide mentors with simple, easy to follow lesson plans to use nearing the end of each session to encourage mindfulness among adolescent females. Recognizing the importance of implementing age-appropriate, child-centered physical activities with children, this handbook is limited to adolescent females within the Go Girls program (ages 11 to 14, or grades 5 to 8). These age ranges were preselected by Big Brothers Big Sisters because they represent an important transitional period for adolescent females. During this transition, adolescent females must learn to adjust to physical changes in the body as well as to learn to cope with difficult mental and emotional circumstances that may occur in their lives.

As stated above, this handbook is limited to a specific age. It is important to recognize that adaptations to the lesson plans may be necessary to meet the developmental needs of all the girls (younger and older) within the program. Adaptations for specific needs considerations, such as mobility issues or visual impairments, may also be necessary.

The specialized yoga practice found within the handbook is adapted from four seasoned yogi professionals in Canada, based on examined current literature, and personal experience; however, this handbook has not yet been tested, and would further benefit from observing the proposed yoga components in practice. The handbook would benefit from formal review by the Big Brothers Big Sisters organization and their active Go Girls mentors.

### **Outline of the Remainder of the Document**

The subsequent chapters within this document provide a foundation for understanding the area of study, the research itself, and the implications to theory and

practice from the research. Specifically, the remaining chapters are as follows: Review of Related Literature; Methodology; Handbook; and Summary, Discussion, and Implications.

Chapter Two presents a literature review that synthesizes related and pertinent literature, and, therefore, provides additional knowledge and understanding of the issue under investigation. This chapter (a) reviews the external influences of transitional periods for adolescent females, (b) reviews the relevance of yoga as an Eastern movement discipline, (c) examines the relationship between yoga practice and physical and mental health, and (d) illustrates the importance of alternative forms of physical activity.

Chapter Three outlines the research methodology that will be used by the researcher to develop the Go Girls Handbook. In addition, this chapter explores the justification for personal observations and explorations with mindfulness. This chapter concludes with a restatement of the purpose of the study.

Chapter Four contains a copy of the handbook. The handbook is divided into four sections. The first section is introductory to mindfulness yoga and lays the groundwork for mentors. The second section outlines the five-session mindful yoga lesson plans. The third section outlines the reflection component for adolescent females in the program, post yoga practice. The final section is the reference page followed by three appendices, which contain the preselected yoga poses.

Chapter Five presents a summary of the project, discussion of implications for practice and theory, recommendations for further research in the area of mindfulness yoga practice and adolescent female populations, and lastly, a concluding thought.



## **CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW**

The present literature review first describes the external influences of transitional periods for adolescent females. Second, the review examines the relevance of yoga as an Eastern-movement discipline within adolescent populations. Third, the review examines the relationship between yoga practice and physical health. Fourth, the review outlines the interconnectedness of yoga practice and mental health. Finally, the review illustrates the importance of alternative forms of physical activity, such as yoga, in school settings.

### **Theoretical Perspectives**

As outlined in Chapter One, this study is situated and informed by three models: Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Systems Theory; Bandura's Social Cognitive Theory; and Zimmerman's Self-Regulation Theory. A combined examination of these three theories provides a lens to explore and understand the importance of influences in the environment that can foster or hinder the overall development of adolescents.

Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Systems Theory emphasizes individual development within a larger social and cultural context. Bronfenbrenner's Theory considers development as occurring within both the immediate environment and also the larger societal influences (Leonard, 2011). There are reciprocal interactions between the developing child and the various environment systems in which an individual exists (Leonard, 2011). There are particular systems within the ecological model, such as the microsystem, that immediately influence a child. These influences refer to the relationship between children and their immediate environment such as family, school, friends, and community (Abrams et al., 2005). There are other systems that are influential to a child's overall development; however, they are less immediate. For example, the

chronosystem refers to the environmental events and transitions that occur throughout an individual's lifespan (Abrams et al., 2005).

Secondly, Albert Bandura's Social Cognitive Theory of Self-Regulation assisted to inform this study by understanding why children behave the way they do and how they develop. Bandura's (1991) theory considers that individuals have reflective and responsive skills and abilities that support them to exhibit self-control over their thoughts, feelings, and actions. In other words, individual development can be influenced through their observations with others, the environment, and behaviours within a certain context (Bandura, 1991). Bandura argues, "people cannot influence their own motivation and actions very well if they do not pay adequate attention to their own performances, the condition under which they occur, and the immediate and distal effects they produce" (p. 250). Consequently, in order to develop self-regulation, an individual must depend on consistency in monitoring oneself. The incorporation of activities that allow an individual to reflect on his or her actions plays a critical role in the development of self-regulatory skills. Children have the capacity to ascertain self-regulation by providing them with opportunities within social environment for them to monitor their performance, their actions, and their behaviours (Bandura, 1991).

Relevant to Bandura's (1991) theory is Barry Zimmerman's Self-Regulation theory. Zimmerman's theory refers to the notion that adolescent populations can reflect cognitively towards personal performance within a given task or activity (Zimmerman & Cleary, 2006). Zimmerman's theory defines self-regulation as "self-generated thoughts, feelings, and actions that are planned and cyclically adapted based on performance feedback to attain self-set goals" (Zimmerman & Cleary, 2006, p. 56). These processes

indicate that an individual should have continuous feedback, so that personal adjustments can occur prior, during and post efforts. Zimmerman's theory believes that in order for an individual to develop self-regulation, he or she must first understand self-efficacy, as it directly influences this process. This can be accomplished through three phases: (a) forethought, which is the process prior to the effort; (b) performance control, which involves learning during; and (c) self-reflection, which considers the process post-performance (Zimmerman & Cleary, 2006). These phases exist within the current study.

Through these theoretical perspectives, it is apparent that the development of children's well-being must be considered both from a social and environmental lens. The child's immediate environment (e.g., the Go Girls program) must create alternative opportunities for adolescent females to develop both mentally and physically. The child's broader environment (e.g., Big Brothers Big Sisters program) must be proactive when implementing programs, so that they foster mental and physical well-being within school settings. The above-mentioned theoretical perspectives underscore the connection between influence/environment and the development of a child's physical and mental well-being. They suggest the importance of implementing mindfulness practices within Go Girls where the girls within the programs can make connections to body and mind and their surrounding environment. Understanding these connections is vital to the foundation of this project.

### **Growth and Development in Female Adolescents**

The transition from early childhood into adolescence can be described as an important yet challenging period in any individual's life. It is during this period that an individual undergoes sudden physical, psychological, and emotional change and

development (Bluth & Blanton, 2014). Lippold, Powers, Syvertsen, Feinberg, and Greenberg's (2012) longitudinal study explored whether there is a strong connection associated between spending an extra year in elementary school and problem behaviours in adolescent populations. They concluded that adolescents who remain in elementary school for an additional year have higher levels of deviant behaviour and antisocial peer relations. These findings suggest that transitional periods with adolescent populations must be dealt with sensitively; otherwise, there is a greater risk of lower self-esteem, depression, and greater stress when dealing with changes within school environments (Lippold et al., 2012).

These developmental transitions during adolescence are especially confusing for females, because they correspond with sudden and rapid hormonal and physical alterations in their body caused by puberty (Lippold et al., 2012; McKenzie, 2001). These psychological changes often leave females feeling more vulnerable than their male counterparts (Lippold et al., 2012). Adolescent females are known for internalizing their feelings, which enhances the likelihood of depression and the need for additional social and emotional strategies more so than are needed by their male peers (White, 2012). Whitehead and Biddle's (2008) qualitative study examined adolescent girls' perceptions of physical activity in order to greater "understand the reasoning behind their physical activity-related choices" (p. 243). They concluded that adolescent females' involvement in physical activities is directly associated with their social interactions and current societal standards. The study identified seven themes that arose from adolescent females' opinions of physical activity as follows: Perceptions of femininity, self-presentational concerns, changing priorities, lack of motivation versus appreciation of the benefits, the

desired structure of physical activity, parental support, and enjoyment (Whitehead & Biddle, 2008). Adolescent females have set perceptions of femininity and are reluctant to undermine their appearance. This perception stems from cultural standards regarding how females should look. These perceptions hinder females' willingness to participate in physical activity; however, contemplation of adolescent females activity preferences and consideration of alternative forms should and can be made available to benefit this age range. Adolescence is a crucial time period to establish a wellness lifestyle that can lead toward healthy lifelong choices (Waechter & Wekerle, 2015).

### **Yoga as an Eastern-Movement Discipline**

Physical activity among adolescence is on a steady decline. This decline can be directly associated with peer influences and social norms. Some adolescent females tend to associate physical activity with masculinity. Whitehead and Biddle (2008) suggest that some adolescent females are reluctant to appear or act in a manner that undermines their femininity. Therefore, it is vital to introduce girls to alternative approaches to physical undertakings that are characterized as being predominantly female oriented (Miller et al., 2014).

Yoga is an ancient discipline intended to unify the self to generate equilibrium and health to all dimensions of an individual. These dimensions consist of the physical, psychological, emotional, and spiritual (Ross & Thomas, 2010). Although mindfulness and yoga practices are traditionally known for being spiritual in nature, the practices themselves are not innately religious (Shapiro, Lyons, Miller, Butler, Vieten, & Zelazo, 2014; Subedi, 2014). In fact, yoga is an integrative practice that combines meditation, breathwork, and elegant movements; additionally, yoga is effectual for therapeutic

treatments relating to trauma and maltreatment in children and adolescent populations (Spinazzola et al., 2011; Subedi, 2014; Waechter & Wekerle, 2015).

Historically, yoga was compared to a tree with six branches: Bhakti, Hatha, Jnana, Karma, Raja, and Tantra. Each type of yoga represented a specific approach to life. The most predominant form of yoga worldwide is Hatha yoga (Weller, 2014). Hatha yoga is performed by focusing on physical movements, postures, and breathing techniques. It is also to be considered the keystone of yoga styles while also being the most beneficial for therapeutic use (Subedi, 2014). Hatha yoga encompasses different styles including, but not limited to, Ashtanga, Bikram, Viniyoga, and Iyengar (Subedi, 2014). Each style of yoga offers its own benefits and focus of practice. Ashtanga yoga is commonly used to reduce stress and build cardiovascular strength and flexibility (Weller, 2014). Bikram is a physical practice involving detoxification of the body through sweat (Weller, 2014). Viniyoga yoga integrates a variety of postures by using chanting, breathwork, and meditation (Weller, 2014). Its purpose is to reduce anxiety and fearfulness in individuals. Iyengar yoga primarily focuses on symmetry and alignment in order to assist oneself to better focus and build body strength (Weller, 2014).

Despite the various forms of yoga that are readily available, it is important to understand that “yoga practice at its core is meant to regulate attention, focus on cultivation of prosocial attitudes and behaviour such as compassion, empathy, and respect for others, and as such, they reflect a system of values and have moral implications” (Shapiro et al., 2014, p. 2). Subedi’s (2014) study found that Hatha yoga assisted in reducing physical activity limitations and improving both lower and upper strength and

flexibility. Hatha yoga also reinforces positive body image and enriches physical fitness in its participants.

### **Yoga and Physical Health**

Physical activity is very important for the growth and development of adolescent females, as well as their physical health. Physical activity in adolescents has a significant role in maintaining and preserving human body functions. Furthermore, physical activities, such as yoga, can contribute toward increasing muscle mass and strengthening the immune system (Lovrenovic, Grujic, Gojkovic, & Grujic, 2016). Yoga is a holistic approach toward calming the mind and body by using a series of meditative techniques. Yoga contributes to several aspects of physical health and fitness. However, physical inactivity in adolescents often leads to obesity and other physical health-related illnesses.

### **Obesity**

Obesity among children and adolescent populations is increasing (Benavides & Caballero, 2009; Whitehead & Biddle, 2008). Furthermore, problems associated with this illness can result in diabetes, hypertension, and heart disease (Benavides & Caballero, 2009). Overweight children and adolescent populations are more at risk of having further complications such as psychological concerns, depression, and anxiety. Benavides and Caballero believe that as a result of being obese, children, particularly females, have greater issues with self-concept. The relevance of searching for alternative opportunities to reduce weight and emphasize healthy lifestyles is critical because there is a direct link to many self-destructive results in later life (Benavides & Caballero, 2009). There are numerous challenges and barriers associated with decreasing weight in children and

adolescents. Finding a physical activity that children enjoy can be the missing link toward assisting them to decrease weight and to better manage weight as a whole.

Moreover, adolescent populations are so fixated on current technologies that they are becoming more sedentary (Benavides & Caballero, 2009; Whitehead & Biddle, 2008). Considerations for alternative forms of physical activities are crucial for engaging children in opportunities to be more physical. Yoga, as an alternative physical activity, involves integrating postures that assist in flexibility or strength challenges at the individual level (Benavides & Caballero, 2009). Benavides and Caballero's pilot study sought to determine the effect of yoga on weight in at-risk adolescent populations. They found overall improvements in self-concept with children who participated in yoga routines. They also concluded that participants exhibited "improvements in psychiatric inventories, suggesting that Ashtanga yoga may provide mental health benefits" (p. 113). Additionally, a participant's parent noted that the yoga program assisted her daughter not only in weight loss but also provided her with greater self-confidence (Benavides & Caballero, 2009). These positive associations can be directly linked to the calming effects of yoga practice.

### **Other Physical Health Benefits**

Alongside weight loss, there are many other physical health benefits that yoga practice can provide. Brown and Leledaki (2010) found that yoga practice assists in correcting inconsistencies in the muscular skeletal system, strengthening the core, improving flexibility, boosting vigor, and enhancing stability. In addition, yoga practice with adolescent females has been known to have outstanding benefits regarding positive well-being and physical developments regarding positive self-image, emotional well-



being, and mindfulness (Bluth & Blanton, 2014; Brown & Leledaki, 2010; Conboy et al., 2013) Yoga, as a mental health practice, can assist adolescent populations to improve breathing patterns, which leads to stress and tension release as well as greater openness to connect the body and mind (Brown & Leledaki, 2010).

### **Yoga and Mental Health**

Yoga is known for reducing stress and enhancing mood and well-being (Khalsa & Butzer, 2016). Yoga practice with adolescents can improve both physical and mental health. In fact, yoga practice can attribute to “mind-body awareness, self-regulation, and physical fitness which can subsequently promote improvements in mental state, health, behavior, and performance” (Khalsa & Butzer, 2016, p. 46). Yoga practice increases mind-body awareness, which can contribute toward greater understanding of positive feelings associated with health behaviours and outcomes (Khalsa & Butzer, 2016). Furthermore, yoga has been connected towards improving adolescents’ ability to manage anxiety, become resilient, and enhance self-regulation (Khalsa & Butzer, 2016).

### **Psychological/Emotional Well-Being**

Mindfulness and yoga practice have been known to foster psychological well-being in adolescent populations by enforcing desired skills such as focused attention, better flexibility, positive response to stressors, and greater awareness of body and mind. In fact, these skills are postulated to augment regulation of emotions and behaviour (Miller et al., 2014; Shapiro et al., 2014; Waechter & Wekerle, 2015). Spinazzola et al.’s (2011) study found that mindfulness practices have been linked to an enhanced concentration of "gray matter" in the central nervous system, which allows for acquiring knowledge, enhancing memory, regulating emotions, and recognizing other people’s

point of views. Similarly, Waechter and Wekerle's (2015) study examined existing literature regarding the effects of Eastern Arts practices, such as yoga, on high-risk adolescents. They concluded that adolescent populations were better able to develop regulation of their emotions and gain self-awareness in their ability to manage daily life struggles.

### **Self-Regulation**

Alongside Waechter and Wekerle's (2015) findings, Shapiro et al.'s (2014) study found that yoga practice with adolescent populations could foster the development of self-regulation required for achievement in academics and enhancement of emotional well-being. Childhood is a period of rapid growth of cerebral functioning during which self-regulation can be relatively pliable. Enhancing adolescents' self-regulation may introduce a multitude of benefits in which children become less troublesome, more prone to formulate meaningful relationships with educators and peers, and more interested and adept at learning (Shapiro et al., 2014). Common yoga techniques, such as controlling how one breathes, involves purposeful and continual attention to internal processes. Being able to regulate attention is central for Eastern-movement disciplines. Alongside attention regulation lies the ability to infuse attention with feelings of acceptance and awareness (Shapiro et al., 2014).

Because yoga practice techniques involve an array of postures, breathing techniques, and meditation, Shapiro et al.'s (2014) study found that yoga exercises target self-regulatory skills and behaviours that are important for problem-solving attainment in school and daily life. Furthermore, a crucial element in yoga practice is that it is constructed for sustained reflection of self. The ability to understand one's own

behaviour is key for academic achievement and success in later life (Douglass, 2010). Bluth and Blanton's (2014) study suggests that adolescents are being exposed to societal stressors that encumber cognition and physical and mental development. The results of this study indicate that mindfulness and Eastern-movement practices are directly associated with positive life satisfaction, euphoria, self-regulation, and emotional wellness. The implementation of a specialized yoga component for adolescent girls can provide stable relationship-building opportunities among peers and a framework towards engaging in self-regulatory behaviours.

### **Somatic Illnesses**

Ross and Thomas's (2010) study compared existing literature regarding the effects of yoga on health outcomes and conditions. They concluded that yoga is an effective form of exercise that alleviates symptoms of mental illness. Furthermore, yoga practice has been known to be an effective alternative to improve physical well-being, mental illnesses, and comorbid conditions, including depression, anxiety, schizophrenia, obsessive compulsive behaviours, and insomnia (Ross & Thomas, 2010; Spinazzola et al., 2011).

Miller et al.'s (2014) study found that "one in five children (21%) ages 9–17 have a diagnosable mental health condition that negatively impacts functioning at home, at school, and with peers" (p. 173). Regardless of this statistic, very few children actually receive the required mental health services. Furthermore, schools are typically the first environment where children are able to receive the required services; however, these services are typically less intensive than desired (Miller et al., 2014).

### **Summary of the Chapter**

Adolescence is a difficult time period in an individual's life. At any particular time, each individual may experience a series of developmental changes. These physical, mental, and emotional changes have been found to influence personal growth. Furthermore, these changes impact how adolescent females tend to associate their engagement of physical activity by how their peers react and what society deems acceptable. This vulnerable age group requires additional forms of physical engagement to establish a healthy lifestyle habit early on. Yoga, as an alternative physical activity, is a holistic discipline, which seeks to unify the self through a combination of movements and techniques. Yoga has a variety of types and styles, but most commonly used worldwide is Hatha yoga, which focuses on physical movements, postures, and breathwork. Yoga practice is meant to regulate attention and focus on building positive attitudes and behaviours. Adolescent females who engage in yoga practice may develop greater mind and body awareness, self-regulation, and physical fitness, which promote psychological well-being, overall health, and greater positive behaviours.

### **CHAPTER THREE: METHODOLOGY**

This handbook aims to support mentors in implementing a specialized yoga program. The handbook is designed specifically to assist adolescent females in alleviating high energy levels nearing the end of each session through the use of mindful yoga. The specialized yoga component was developed throughout my undergraduate studies, in 2015, as part of my Bachelor of Early Childhood Education Honours thesis. The purpose of the study was to systematically compile previously effective yoga strategies towards facilitating active involvement of adolescent females. With that in mind, the definitive goal was to design a specialized yoga component that could assist youth females in building self-regulation skills, and aid in transitions back to regular school structures. Mass media platforms are becoming more commonly used in research with children (O'Reilly, Ronzoni, & Dogra, 2013). Analysis of data can be retrieved through various useful sources such as newspapers, television, and the internet (O'Reilly, Ronzoni, & Dogra, 2013). This information advances the investigation by offering a publicly visible data and documentation perspective, which is open for interpretation. The study used naturally occurring data from four Canadian-based websites: Isakov (2012), MacGillivray (2014), McDougall (2015), and McGee (2015).

I purposefully selected these websites in Canada that implemented criteria based on development of self, identified health benefits and promotion and advocacy of yoga organizations. Content analysis was utilized as a method to dissect naturally occurring documents from four accredited websites written by licensed yoga professionals in Canada. A deductive content analysis is used with the general aim to build on an existing yoga program and adopt them to the needs of Go Girls (Elo & Kyngas, 2008). According

to Krippendorff (1980) content analysis is a “research method for making replicable and valid inferences from data to their context, with the purpose of providing knowledge, new insights, a representation of facts and a practical guide to action” (as cited in Elo & Kyngas, 2008, p. 108). The aim was to reach a broad description of the phenomenon by analyzing the concepts and categories of the yoga components, and refining the yoga components for the specific group.

During my graduate studies, I have been working on the specialized yoga component and shaping it into a handbook. I began by removing complex poses to ensure the safety of all participants. I organized the sequence of yoga poses to allow for appropriate flow between poses and throughout each subsequent session. I reexamined the wording for mentor instructions to be simple, direct, and age appropriate. I also provided the physical and mental benefits for all poses, for general knowledge.

My continuous interest in physical activity and alternative forms began from childhood and has grown throughout my adult life. As a Registered Early Childhood Educator and Master of Education candidate, I am familiar with developing and facilitating curriculum plans that focus on holistic development of individual children and groups across a variety of age ranges. I have utilized observation techniques to enhance the relationships between mentor and mentee. I also believe it is essential to promote continuous learning and professional growth in education so that new and exciting opportunities to learn and develop can occur.

Throughout my educational experiences, I have had the opportunity to engage in alternative forms of physical activity, such as mindfulness and yoga practice, with all age groups (toddler to school-age). Now, as a seasoned Go Girls mentor with Big Brothers

Big Sisters, I have been able to reflect on the program and its participants both prior and post sessions. There were three major objectives for this project:

1. To provide opportunities for mentors to assist adolescent females through transitional periods;
2. To assist mentors in the planning and execution of a calm and effective program that promotes self-regulation; and
3. To support the use of yoga within adolescent populations, as an additional element in a child's life for personal, physical, and mental health.

These reflections have resulted in the creation of this handbook.

## CHAPTER FOUR: THE HANDBOOK

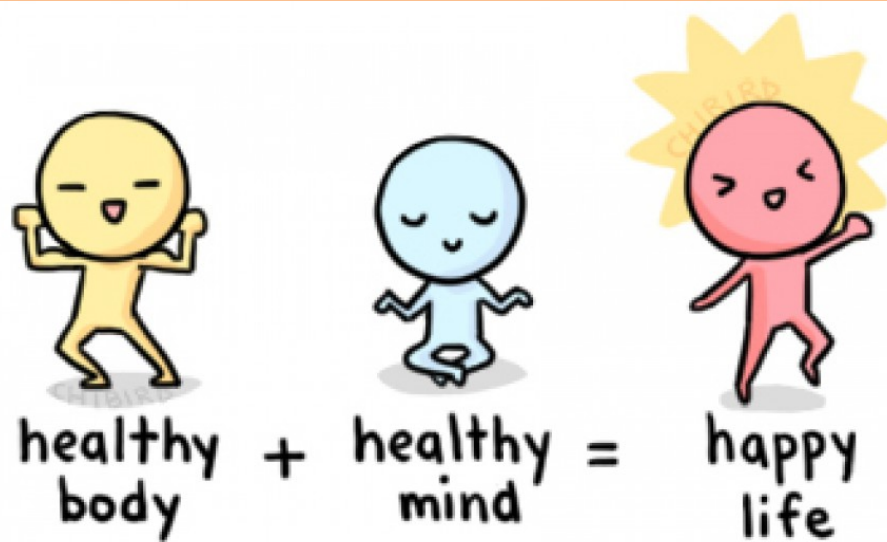
Following a review of the pertinent literature, past research, and based on personal involvement, a need was seen for a practical easy-to-use handbook for mentors to utilize yoga practice nearing the end of each Go Girls session.

This chapter presents the hardcopy of the handbook: *Go Girls Yoga: Healthy Bodies, Healthy Minds (A Specialized Yoga Handbook For Mentors)*.



## GO GIRLS YOGA: HEALTHY BODIES, HEALTHY MINDS

(A SPECIALIZED YOGA HANDBOOK FOR MENTORS)



(BENNETT, 2016)

CREATED BY:

TIFFANY TOUCHETTE

BROCK UNIVERSITY, 2017

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

FOREWORD	31
SECTION 1: THE BASICS	32
Introduction	33
Making Connections	33
Mindful Yoga	34
Why Yoga?	35
Handbook Overview	36
SECTION 2: FIVE-SESSION LESSON PLAN	39
Session 1	40
Session 2	42
Session 3	44
Session 4	47
Session 5	50
SECTION 3: REFLECTION DOCUMENTS	52
Assessment Overview	53
Yoga Journal	54
Think Sheet	55
SECTION 4: REFERENCES	56
Appendix A: Session 2 - Mountain Pose	58
Appendix B: Session 3 - Standing Poses	61
Tall Mountain, Tree, Chair, Warrior 1, 2, and 3	
Appendix C: Session 4 - Balancing Poses	74
Cobra, Four-Limbed Staff, Upward-Facing Dog,	
Downward-Facing Dog Plank	

## **FOREWORD**

Yoga is an all-inclusive body and mind practice that ranges from physical movements and positions, breathing exercises, and relaxation techniques in order to develop self-regulation and self-awareness (Ross & Thomas, 2010). Its purpose is to encompass physical, emotional, cognitive, and spiritual levels by ultimately unifying the self. While children try to gain control of themselves through various poses during yoga practice, mindfulness is emphasized: the breathing, being in the moment provides a stress-free atmosphere and children are free to be who they are. This handbook is intended for mentors to assist adolescent females within the program to transition with ease, to implement a calm and effective program that promotes self-regulation, and to explore an alternative physical activity that fosters personal, physical, and psychological health. The ideal time to introduce this handbook would be prior to the commencement of Go Girls, preferably during the orientation session, so that mentors can be familiarized and develop an understanding of its purpose and intentions.

## **SECTION 1: THE BASICS**

## INTRODUCTION

Adolescent populations are faced with stressors in daily life from both school and home. These stressors contribute toward the development of mental health and behavioural issues that are predominant in adolescence (Khalsa, Hickey-Schultz, Cohen, Steiner, & Cope, 2012). These stress factors in adolescent females' lives can influence their thinking and learning. Educators should strive to create an environment that promotes adolescent females' growth and development by understanding that they come into schools with their own issues (Subramaniam & Silverman, 2007). However, when educators create an environment that allows adolescent females to feel a sense of comfort and confidence, it will also enhance their willingness to learn. These considerations can also be applied to youth programs such as Go Girls. Children and adolescent populations learn through exploring their body, recognizing how their body moves, and developing a connection to oneself, others, and the world. Incorporating mindfulness approaches with adolescent females has been linked to reducing children's daily stress, increasing physical and emotional health, and improving academic outcomes (Finnan, 2015).

## MAKING CONNECTIONS

Schools have long been identified as contexts that can play a vital role in fostering children's positive development. The Ontario Curriculum – Revised : Health and Physical Education (Ontario Ministry of Education, 2015) recognizes that all learners have needs and those needs are often diverse. The curriculum seeks to assist all learners in building necessary 21st century knowledge, skills, and thinking abilities needed to be active, healthy, and responsible leaders of tomorrow. Furthermore, the health and

physical education curriculum is meant to provide a learning environment that supports and fosters learners' developmental domains: social, emotional, cognitive, and physical. In addition, the curriculum is meant to support learners' mental health, develop resilience, and promote well-being.

Go Girls is a group mentoring program that was developed in 2006 by Big Brothers Big Sisters Canada. The program's philosophy is to develop healthy body and healthy minds in adolescent females (Big Brothers Big Sisters, 2011). The program is implemented in select schools within the Niagara Region. The need to incorporate mindfulness and yoga-based approaches should be considered.

## **MINDFUL YOGA**

The growth of mindfulness-based approaches, such as yoga practice in schools, is increasing. Mindfulness is a meditative technique to increase conscious awareness of thoughts and experiences in a given moment and to purposefully pay attention to our thoughts and feelings without reacting to them (Hussain, 2015). Brown and Ryan (2003) describe consciousness as being embedded in both awareness and attention. They explain that

awareness is the background “radar” of consciousness, continually monitoring the inner and outer environment. One may be aware of stimuli without them being at the center of attention. Attention is a process of focusing conscious awareness, providing heightened sensitivity to a limited range of experience. (p. 822)

The act of being mindful is considered to enhance attention to and awareness of a given experience or moment. Specifically, yoga and mindfulness practices enhance an individual's ability to be receptive. This state of conscious awareness and attention involves metacognitive level of mind in which an individual is aware of his or her thoughts or state of mind.

### **WHY YOGA?**

Mindful yoga is meant to assist adolescent females to develop awareness of their patterns in the mind; this is done through breathing techniques, relaxation, and postures. Twenty-first century education and society has many distractions, one of which is our wandering minds. This uncontrolled thinking defines our well-being and sense of self (Ergas, 2013). Yoga practice can build adolescent females' ability to think properly within a given moment, free of intrusive thoughts (Handley & Earls, 2014). Mindful yoga practice can be a powerful instrument through which we confront our inner self and begin to recognize its effect on our experience (Douglass, 2010). What this means is that adolescent females become familiar with their own mental response through exploration of each yoga pose. This conscious experimentation allows adolescent females to develop awareness of self in which they are better equipped to question their thoughts and actions. Yoga practice can be an essential opportunity for adolescent females in the Go Girls program to recognize their thought processes and build self-regulation.

## HANDBOOK OVERVIEW

The five-session lesson plan is to be used as a cool-down exercise to conclude each Go Girls session. The girls will learn a variety of skills through mindful yoga practice. Throughout this unit, the girls will learn general objectives, breathing technique, and basic standing and balancing poses, and they will lead fellow peers through their created yoga sequence. By the end of this experience, the girls will be able to perform their own yoga sequences and reflect on the “why, how, and so what” of yoga, so that they can continue to incorporate yoga into their daily lives.

Session 1 is a basic overview of the unit. The girls are assigned a spot in the gym and a mat with a corresponding number. Discussion about yoga and yoga-related experiences are encouraged. The girls will have time to get acquainted with how to roll the mat, their general yoga location, and the overall idea of participating in yoga. The mentor will discuss the yoga journals and think sheet, which are meant to enhance adolescent females’ thinking and awareness.

Session 2 is a fundamental component within mindfulness-based practices. How one breathes is key for developing a connection to the self. The mentor works with the girls on their breathing and eventually gets the children to perform a yoga pose with proper breathing technique.

Session 3 involves girls’ hands-on participation with standing yoga poses. The mentor will guide and instruct the girls through each yoga pose, allowing them time to regulate and focus their attention.

Session 4 involves engaging the girls through balancing yoga poses. The mentor will guide and instruct the girls through the yoga sequence, while providing the girls with



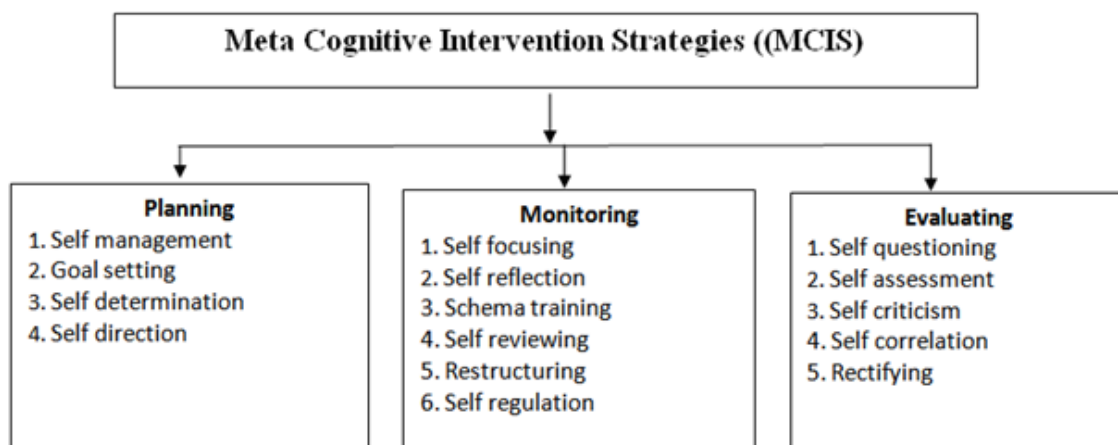
time to experience each pose. At this point, it is at the mentor's discretion whether he or she decides to repeat sessions 3 and 4. Session 3 and 4 could be implemented on a regular basis as a cool-down activity in the Go Girls program.

Finally, Session 5 allows the girls to express themselves by taking the class through their designed yoga sequence. The purpose behind the peer-led exercise is for the girls to consciously build metacognitive awareness and self-regulation by planning a yoga sequence, monitoring how they are doing during the yoga sequence, and evaluating what they learned from this experience.

Using Fathima, Sasikumar, and Roja (2014) metacognitive intervention strategies (Chart 1) as a general theoretical underpinning, I have developed a think sheet for the girls to complete after their yoga sequence. The think sheet is a supplementary exercise for the girls to develop recognition of their thought process, after instruction. Each lesson is complementary with the others and seeks to build adolescent females' self-regulation skills and self-awareness.

Chart 1

*Metacognitive Intervention Strategies*



## APPENDIX COMPONENTS

For the purpose of this handbook, I have included appendices of all required yoga poses, assessment overview, sample yoga journals, and the think sheet. Appendix A: Session 2 pose, Appendix B: Session 3 Standing Poses, Appendix C: Session 4 Balancing Poses are yoga sequences for each subsequent lesson. Section 3 is the assessment overview that outlines what is expected during each of the five-session lesson plans. It discusses the lesson theme and assessment protocol. The assessment overview is also connected to the Ontario Health and Physical Education Curriculum Grade 8 specific expectations (Ontario Ministry of Education, 2015). The overview uses the curriculum's numerical system to identify specific expectations for each day and what each day hopes to connect and evaluate. The purpose behind connecting the present handbook to the Ontario Health and Physical Education Curriculum was to demonstrate that mindfulness practice could be seamlessly implemented into school curricula. The girls' learning within mindful yoga tends to relate to active living and movement competence strands found within living skills. The yoga journal and the think sheet (Section 3) are meant to be assessment tools to gauge adolescent females' metacognitive awareness, enhance self-regulation, and foster learning. They are also supplementary tools to measure the effectiveness of yoga practice between grades 5 to 8 in a Go Girls program.

**SECTION 2: FIVE-SESSION LESSON PLAN**

## **SESSION 1**

Session 1 involves laying the groundwork for the upcoming sessions. The mentor will prepare the girls for understanding yoga protocols and objectives. The mentor will also discuss the peer-led yoga practice.

## **SESSION 1: GENERAL DISCUSSION OF OBJECTIVES, PROTOCOLS, AND EQUIPMENT**

### Adolescent Female Objectives:

By the end of this lesson, the girls will be able to

- Recognize and understand yoga protocols in the Go Girls Program.
- Demonstrate proper use of equipment and clean-up procedure.
- Remember mat location for subsequent lessons.

### Introduction:

- How many of you enjoy being physically active, but do not enjoy sweating?
- Well, you are in luck. This next unit is yoga.
- I will be taking you through the necessary learning sequences for you to get acquainted with yoga.

### Setup:

- Place the girls alphabetically (when I call your name please stand up and follow me to your designated yoga spot).
- Everyone take a good look around, so that you will remember your spot.
- I am now going to pass out your yoga mats with its corresponding number.
- Each class will use the mats, and at the end of each class you are to roll them up and return them.
- Mentor demonstrates how to roll the yoga mat.

### Peer-Led Preparation

- At the end of this overall unit, each adolescent female will be able to show peers her very own yoga sequence.
- What this means is that all adolescent females will have an opportunity to show their peers what they have learned.
- Each girl will have to plan a yoga sequence. What this entails is that we will all have to think about what we have learned and plan accordingly.
- During your yoga sequence, it is important to think about how you are feeling.
- After everyone has completed her own yoga sequence, you will be given a think sheet that shows me what you learned, how you felt, and any other thoughts you may have had with this experience.

### Assessment:

- Can everyone go to the designated spot?
- Can everyone roll up his or her yoga mat?
- Can anyone tell me what we do with the mat once it is rolled up?
- What do we think about each of you developing your own yoga sequence?

## **SESSION 2**

Yoga practice is not just about moving your physical body, it is important to breath accordingly. During Session 2, the girls will learn the three-step breathing technique (nose, belly, and lungs). To finish the session, the mentor and girls will practice mindfulness breathwork in combination with a simple yoga pose.

## SESSION 2: BREATHING TECHNIQUE

### Adolescent Female Objectives:

By the end of this lesson, the girls will be able to

- Use the appropriate three-step breathing technique (nose, belly, lungs).
- Demonstrate mountain pose.
- Use breathing technique with mountain pose.

### Introduction:

- Let's grab our numbered mats and roll them out in our designated spot.
- Who can demonstrate how they breathe when they run really fast? How about when you walk? Is there a difference?
- Just like all physical activity, there are certain techniques for breathing.
- Today we are going to learn how to breath properly during yoga practice.

### Lesson:

- Let's begin by sitting up straight with our legs crossed.
- We are going to breathe in deeply, and then exhale slowly using our nose.
- Next, we will breathe in again, concentrating on where we are breathing within the body. We want to visualize our breath flowing from the nose, to the belly, and in the lungs.
- Let's practice our breathing for 30 seconds; remember to focus on each breath.
- Alright, let's try our new breathing while doing a yoga pose.

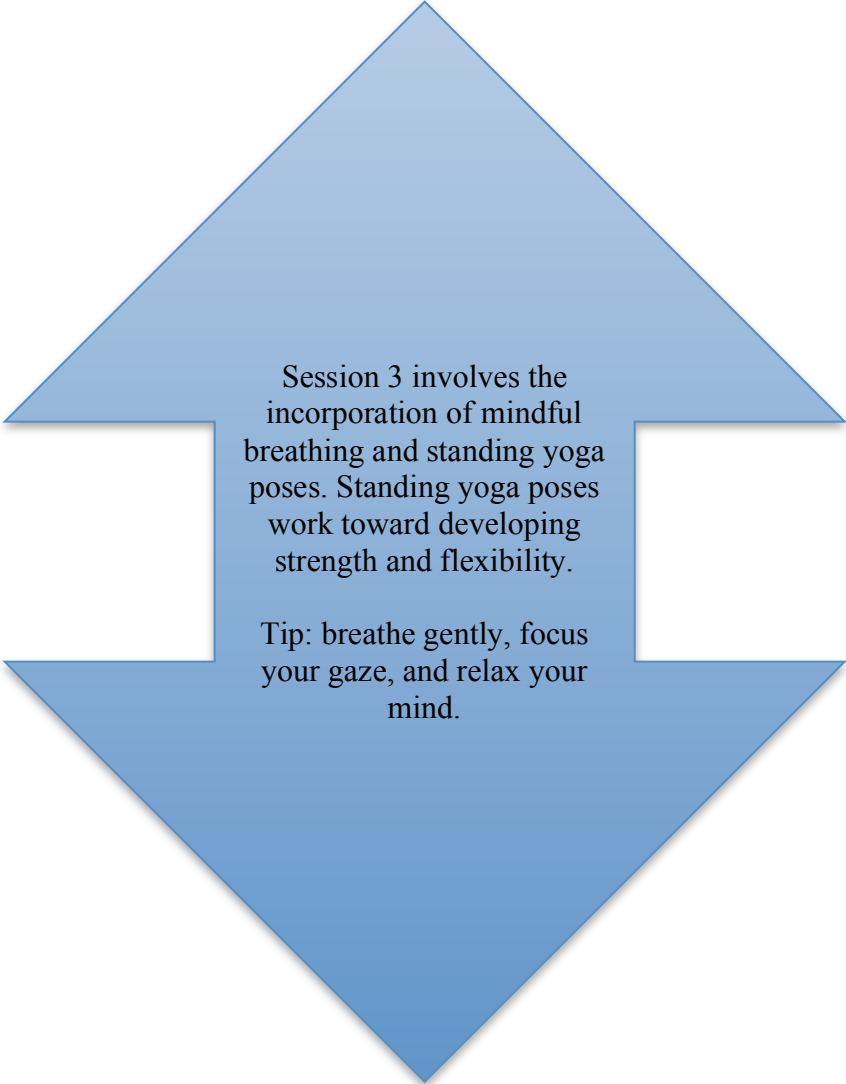
### Mountain Pose (Appendix A):

- We are going to stand with our feet hip-width apart.
- Remember to breathe slowly and deeply at an even pace.
- Keep your neck aligned with your spine.
- We are going to bring our hands together at our hearts. Like this (demonstrate).
- Relax your face, eyes, jaw, and throat.
- Focus on how you feel.

### Assessment:

Yoga Journal

### SESSION 3



Session 3 involves the incorporation of mindful breathing and standing yoga poses. Standing yoga poses work toward developing strength and flexibility.

Tip: breathe gently, focus your gaze, and relax your mind.



### SESSION 3: BASIC STANDING POSES

#### Adolescent Female Objectives:

By the end of this lesson, the girls will be able to

- Demonstrate basic yoga poses in sequence.
- Mountain pose, Tall Mountain, Tree, Chair, Warrior 1, 2, and 3 (Appendix B).

#### Introduction:

- Let's grab our numbered mats and roll them out in our designated spot.
- Who remembers the breathing technique from last week?
- Can someone demonstrate the breathing technique using Mountain Pose?
- Today we are going to learn six more basic standing yoga poses.

#### Tall Mountain:

- So let's all stand in Mountain Pose.
- We are going to start by taking a deep breath in; let's raise our arms above our heads.
- Breathe out. Let's keep those arms straight up and shoulder width apart.
- Breath in, let's spread your fingers wide.
- Back to Mountain Pose.

#### Tree:

- Alright everyone, let's find a spot in front of us that we can look at.
- Let's stand up tall and straight.
- We are going to inhale and draw our shoulders back.
- Let's bring our hands together at our hearts.
- Lift our left leg up and rest it against our right leg.
- Continue to gaze at our spot and breathe.

#### Chair:

- Stand in Mountain Pose.
- Inhale and raise your arms above your head.
- Keep your arms in line with your ears.
- Exhale and bend your knees as if you are sitting in a chair.
- Continue to sink deeper into the pose on each exhale.

#### Warrior 1:

- Stand in Mountain Pose
- Let's place our legs three to four feet apart.
- Turn your right foot 90 degrees and slightly turn left foot outward so your toes are facing away (demonstrate).
- Keep your arms at your side.
- Inhale and extend your arms over your head.
- Exhale and spread fingers apart.

**Warrior 2:**

- Stand in Mountain Pose
- Let's place our legs three to four feet apart.
- Turn your right foot 90 degrees and slightly turn left foot outward so your toes are facing away.
- Inhales and raise your arms to shoulder height and spread your fingers apart.
- Exhale and bend your front left knee.
- Remember to keep it directly over your ankle.
- Sink in deep and breath.

**Warrior 3:**

- Begin in Mountain Pose.
- Stand with your legs three to four feet apart.
- Turn right foot 90 degrees and place your left foot facing forward.
- Find a spot on the floor in front of you to keep your focus.
- Inhale, and bend over your left leg and straighten.
- Carefully extend your arms out in front of you.
- Bring your right leg off the floor behind you.

Assessment:  
Yoga Journal

## SESSION 4

Session 4 involves balancing yoga poses. Balancing poses aim to improve focus and calm the mind. The girls can learn to approach life with calm awareness.

Tip: Stay calm, focused, and centered while holding each pose.

## SESSION 4: BASIC BALANCING POSES

### Adolescent Female Objectives:

By the end of this lesson, the girls will be able to

- Demonstrate basic balance poses in sequence.
- Cobra, Four-Limbed Staff, Upward-Facing Dog, Downward-Facing Dog, Plank (Appendix C).

### Introduction:

- Let's grab our numbered mats and roll them out in our designated spot.
- Who remembers some of the poses from last week?
- Today we are going to learn five basic balancing yoga poses.

### Cobra:

- Let's lay on the floor belly down.
- Place your hands flat on the ground near your rib cage.
- Hug your elbows against your side, and slightly bend them (like this).
- Make sure the tops of your toes are hitting the floor.
- Inhale and lift your upper half all the way up.
- Roll your shoulders back and gaze straight ahead.

### Four-Limbed Staff:

- Let's lay on the floor belly down.
- Inhale, and bring hands to shoulders.
- Tuck in toes and lift.
- Keep your body stable.
- Hold for three breaths and then gently lower yourself back on the floor as you exhale.

### Upward-Facing Dog:

- Let's lay on the floor belly down.
- Bring your upper half up and place your forearms on the floor.
- Spread your fingers wide.
- Roll back your shoulders.
- Press your hands down, inhale and straighten your arms.
- Draw your spine backward.
- Relax and take three breaths.

### Downward-Facing Dog:

- We are going to lay face down on the floor.
- Place your hands at the center of your chest.
- Press up on all fours, keeping your hands and feet where they are.
- Inhale, tuck your toes under, and lift your hips up toward the sky.
- Straighten your knees, and draw your thighs back.

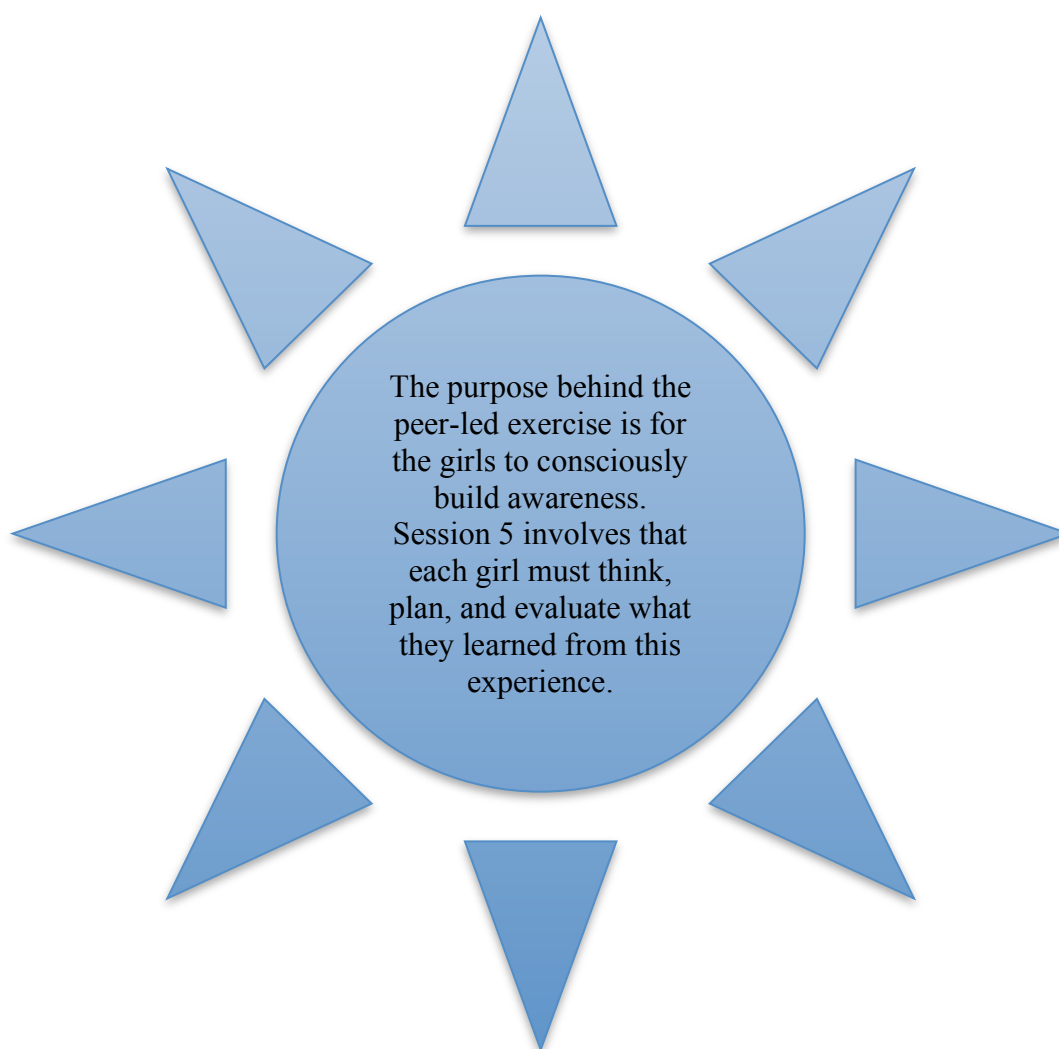
- Bring your heels toward the floor.

Plank:

- Begin on your hands and knees on the mat.
- Wrists are directly under your shoulders.
- Extend your legs straight out behind you, remember to tuck your toes under.
- Look straight down at the floor.
- Bring your belly in towards your spine.
- Hold pose and breath.

Assessment:  
Yoga Journal

## SESSION 5



**SESSION 5: PEER-LED YOGA SESSION**

Adolescent Female Objectives:

By the end of this lesson, the girls will be able to

- Demonstrate their planned yoga sequence, monitor how they are doing during, and evaluate what they learned from this experience.

Introduction:

- Let's grab our numbered mats and roll them out in our designated spot.
- What have we learned throughout this unit?
- What differences did you notice between standing and balancing yoga poses?
- Are we excited to see what our fellow classmates have come up with? I know I am!
- Who would like to go first? Any volunteers? (If no one volunteers, the mentor could start by doing a quick yoga sequence to get others engaged).

Setup: Led by each individual girl.

Assessment: Think Sheet

## REFLECTIONS



### ASSESSMENT OVERVIEW

Session	Lesson Theme	Assessment (informal/formal)	Specific Expectations, Physical Education (Grade 8)
1	General discussion of objectives, protocol, & equipment	General Questions - Assign the girls spot, yoga mat, and let them test out equipment. - Discuss objectives, and peer-led portion.	A1.1, A1.2, A1.3, A3.1,
2	Breathing technique	Yoga Journal	A1.1, A1.2, A1.3, A2.3, A3.1, B2.3
3	Basic standing positions	Yoga Journal	A1.1, A1.2, A1.3, A2.3, A3.1, B1.1, B1.3, B2.1, B2.2
4	Basic balancing positions	Yoga Journal	A1.1, A1.2, A1.3, A2.3, A3.1, B1.1, B1.3, B2.1, B2.2
5	Peer Led Yoga	Peer Led Instruction & Think Sheet.  - Each adolescent female will have an opportunity to plan their yoga sequence, monitor their understanding through engaging with peers, and evaluate their thinking after completing their instruction.	A1.1, A1.2, A1.3, A2.3, A2.4, A3.1, B1.1, B1.3, B2.1, B2.2

## YOGA JOURNAL

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

My Favorite Yoga Pose is

because...

	<hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/>
--	-------------------------------------

### Today I Learned

---

---

---

**Personal Reflection** (How you felt, what went well or didn't go well, what can you do to improve for next time, etc.)

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

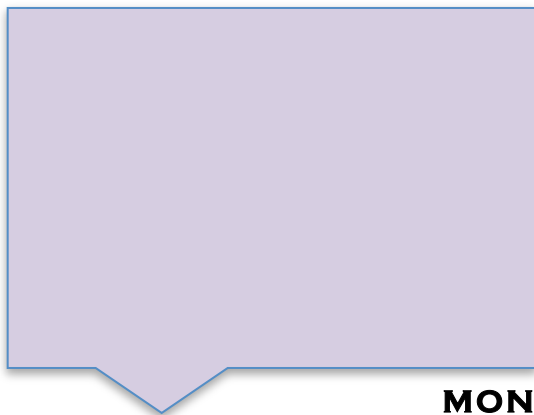
---

---

# THINK SHEET

## PLANNING

I AM THINKING



I AM WONDERING



## MONITORING

I AM NOTICING



I AM SEEING



## EVALUATION

I AM FEELING



I AM UNDERSTANDING



## References

- Bennett, V. (2016). *Healthy body healthy minds clipart* [Online image]. Retrieved February 25<sup>th</sup>, 2017 from <https://clipartfest.com/download/bb82d78aa0db168b4d8b0cc45808accf2c26f41f.html>
- Big Brothers Big Sisters. (2011). *Go Girls! Group mentoring*. Retrieved from <http://www.bigbrothersbigsisters.ca/en/home/mentoringprograms/gogirls.aspx>
- Brown, K., & Ryan, R. (2003). The benefits of being present: Mindfulness and its role in psychological well-being. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 84(4), 822–848.
- Douglass, L. (2010). Yoga in the public schools: Diversity, democracy and the use of critical thinking in educational debate. *Religions & Education*, 37(2). 162–174. doi:10.1080/15507394.2010.486370
- Ergas, O. (2013). Two mind-altering curriculums: Contemplation, mindfulness, and the educational question whether “to think or not to think?” *Journal of Transformative Education*, 11(4), 275–296.
- Fathima, M., Sasikumar, N., & Roja, M. (2014). Enhancing teaching competency of graduate teacher trainees through metacognitive intervention strategies. *American Journal of Applied Psychology*, 2(1), 27–32.
- Finnan, C. (2015). Getting on the mat: Teachers and students engaging in yoga together. *Childhood Education*, 91(6), 463–468.
- Handley, M., & Earls, J. (2014). Minding the gap: Incorporating mindfulness to facilitate students’ soft-skills development. *NACE Journal*, 75(1), 25–29.

- Hussain, D. (2015). Meta-cognition in mindfulness: A conceptual analysis. *Psychological Thought*, 8(2), 132–141.
- Khalsa, S., Hickey-Schultz, L., Cohen, D., Steiner, N., & Cope, S. (2012). Evaluation of the mental health benefits of yoga in secondary school: A preliminary randomized controlled trial. *Journal of Behavioral Health Services & Research*, 39(1), 80–90.
- McDougall, M. (2015) *Joy peace and health: The yoga journal of Mona McDougall*. Retrieved from <http://joypeaceandhealth.com/2011/pose-guide/boat-navasana/>
- Ontario Ministry of Education. (2015). *The Ontario curriculum, grades 1-8: Health and physical education*. Toronto, Canada: Author.
- Ross, A., & Thomas, S. (2010). The health benefits of yoga and exercise: A review of comparison studies. *Journal of Alternative & Complementary Medicine*, 16(1), 3–12. doi:10.1089/acm.2009.0044
- Subramaniam, P., & Silverman, S. (2007). Middle school students' attitudes toward physical education, *Teaching and Teacher Education*, 23(5), 602–611.

**APPENDIX A: SESSION 2 – MOUNTAIN POSE****Mountain Pose**

Tāḍāsana



(McDougall, 2015)

MENTOR INSTRUCTIONS	NUMBER OF BREATHS
<b>Standing</b>	<b>5</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Stand with feet hip-width apart.</li> <li>• Remember to breathe slowly and deeply at an even pace.</li> <li>• Keep neck aligned with your spine.</li> <li>• Bring your hands together at your heart.</li> <li>• Relax your face, eyes, jaw, and throat.</li> <li>• Focus on how you feel.</li> <li>• This pose is called Mountain Pose.</li> </ul>	

<b>BENEFITS</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Improves posture</li> <li>• Strengthens thighs, knees, and ankles.</li> <li>• Firms belly and bum.</li> </ul>

**APPENDIX B: SESSION 3 - STANDING POSES****Tall Mountain**

Tādāsana



(McDougall, 2015)



MENTOR INSTRUCTIONS	NUMBER OF BREATHS
<b>Standing</b>	<b>5</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Stand in Mountain Pose.</li> <li>• Inhale and raise your arms above your head.</li> <li>• Keep your arms straight and shoulder width apart.</li> <li>• Spread your fingers wide.</li> </ul>	

BENEFITS
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Improves posture</li> <li>• Strengthens thighs, knees, and ankles.</li> <li>• Firms belly and bum.</li> </ul>

## Tree

Vṛkṣāsana



(McDougall, 2015)

MENTOR INSTRUCTIONS	NUMBER OF BREATHS
<b>Standing</b>	<b>5</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Find a spot in front of us that we can look at.</li> <li>• Stand up tall and straight.</li> <li>• Inhale and draw your shoulders back.</li> <li>• Bring your hands together at your heart.</li> <li>• Lift left leg up to meet the side of the right leg.</li> <li>• Continue to gaze at your spot and breathe.</li> <li>• Repeat with right leg up.</li> </ul>	

<b>BENEFITS</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Strengthens legs, ankles, and feet.</li> <li>• Improves flexibility in the hips and knees.</li> <li>• Improves balance.</li> </ul>

**Chair**

Utkaṭāsana



(McDougall, 2015)

MENTOR INSTRUCTIONS	NUMBER OF BREATHS
<b>Standing</b>	<b>5</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Stand in Mountain Pose.</li> <li>• Inhale and raise arms above your head, in line with your ears.</li> <li>• Exhale and bend your knees as if you are sitting in a chair.</li> <li>• Continue to sink deeper into the pose on your exhales.</li> </ul>	

BENEFITS
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Strengthens thighs, calves, spine, and ankles.</li> <li>• Stretches shoulders and chest.</li> <li>• Stimulates abs and heart.</li> <li>• Energizes the entire body.</li> </ul>

## Warrior 1

Vīrabhadrāsana I



(McDougall, 2015)

MENTOR INSTRUCTIONS	NUMBER OF BREATHS
<b>Standing</b>	<b>5</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Stand with your legs three to four feet apart</li> <li>• Turn right foot 90 degrees and slightly turn left foot outward so the toes are facing away.</li> <li>• Keep arms at your side.</li> <li>• Inhale and extend your arms over your head in line with your ears.</li> <li>• Spread fingers apart.</li> </ul>	

BENEFITS
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Stretches chest, lungs, shoulders, neck, and belly.</li> <li>• Strengthens shoulders, arms, and back muscles.</li> </ul>

## Warrior II

Vīrabhadrāsana II



(McDougall, 2015)



MENTOR INSTRUCTIONS	NUMBER OF BREATHS
<b>Standing</b>	<b>5</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Stand with your legs three to four feet apart</li><li>• Turn right foot 90 degrees and slightly turn left foot outward so the toes are facing away.</li><li>• Inhale and raise your arms to shoulder height, spread the fingertips.</li><li>• Exhale and bend your front (left) knee, keeping it directly over your ankle.</li><li>• Gaze over your left hand.</li><li>• Sink in deep and breath.</li></ul>	

BENEFITS
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Stretches legs and ankles.</li><li>• Strengthens shoulders, chest, and lungs.</li><li>• Increases stamina.</li></ul>

## Warrior III

Vīrabhadrāsana III



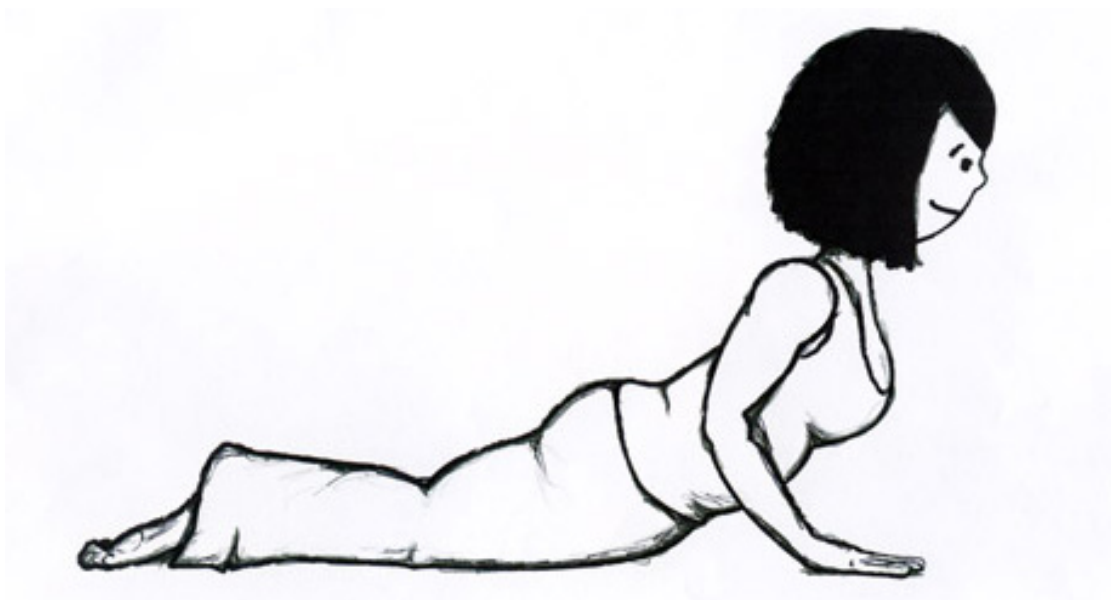
(McDougall, 2015)

MENTOR INSTRUCTIONS	NUMBER OF BREATHS
<b>Standing/Balance</b>	<b>5</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Stand with your legs three to four feet apart</li> <li>• Turn right foot 90 degrees and place your left foot facing forward.</li> <li>• Find a spot on the floor in front of you to keep your focus.</li> <li>• Inhale, bend over your left leg and straighten.</li> <li>• Carefully extend your arms out in front of you in line with your ears.</li> <li>• Bring your right leg off the floor behind you.</li> </ul> <p><b>Adaptation:</b></p> <p>Arms in Airplane mode.</p>	

BENEFITS
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Strengthens ankles, legs, shoulders, and muscles in the back.</li> <li>• Tightens abdomen.</li> <li>• Improves balance and posture.</li> </ul>

**APPENDIX C: SESSION 4 - BALANCING POSES****Cobra**

Bhujangāsana



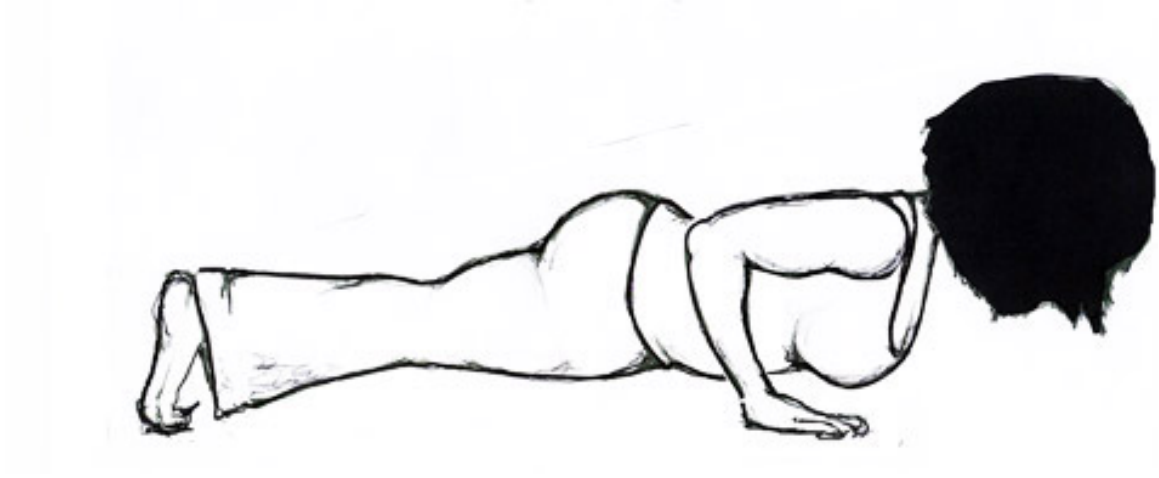
(McDougall, 2015)

MENTOR INSTRUCTIONS	NUMBER OF BREATHS
<b>Balance</b>	<b>5</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Lay on the floor belly down.</li> <li>• Place your hands flat on the ground near your lower rib cage</li> <li>• Hug your elbows against your side, and slightly bend them.</li> <li>• Make sure the tops of your toes are hitting the floor.</li> <li>• Inhale and lift your upper half all the way up.</li> <li>• Roll your shoulders back</li> <li>• Gaze straight ahead.</li> </ul>	

BENEFITS
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Strengthens the spine.</li> <li>• Stretches the chest, lungs, shoulders, and abs.</li> <li>• Firms butt.</li> <li>• Assists to relieve stress and fatigue.</li> <li>• Opens the heart and lungs.</li> </ul>

## Four Limbed Staff

Chaturāṅga Daṇḍāsana



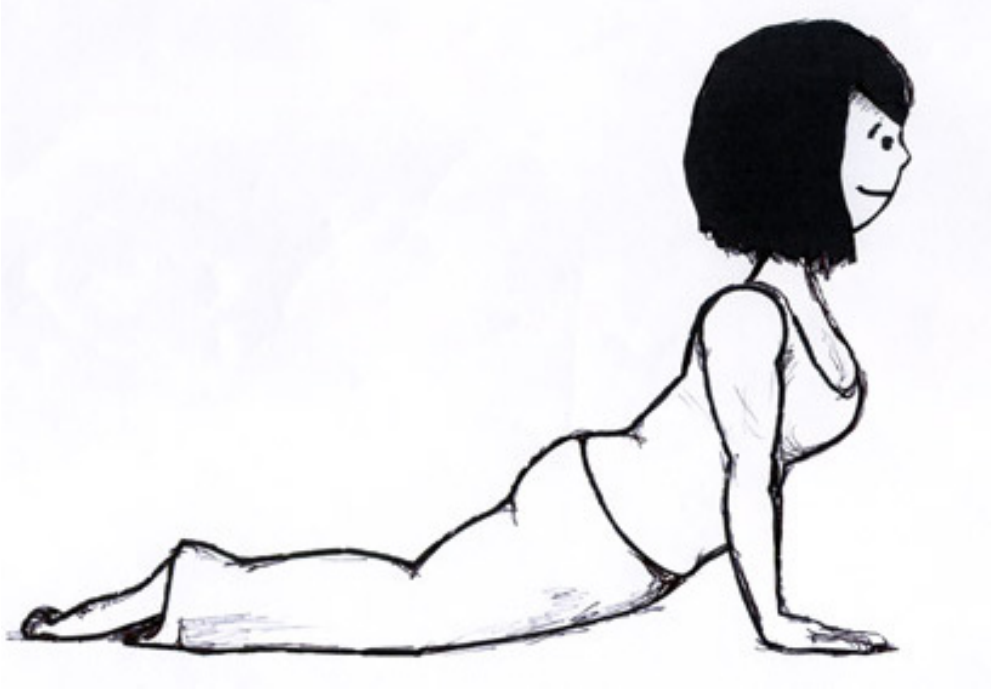
(McDougall, 2015)

MENTOR INSTRUCTIONS	NUMBER OF BREATHS
<b>Balance</b>	<b>4</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Lay on the floor belly down.</li> <li>• Inhale, bring hands to shoulders, tuck in toes and lift.</li> <li>• Keep your body stable.</li> <li>• Hold for 3 breaths and then gently lower yourself back on the floor as you exhale.</li> </ul>	

BENEFITS
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Strengthens the arms and wrists.</li> <li>• Tones belly.</li> </ul>

## Upward-Facing Dog

Ūrdhva Mukha Śvānāsana



(McDougall, 2015)



MENTOR INSTRUCTIONS	NUMBER OF BREATHS
<b>Balance</b>	<b>5</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Lay on the floor belly down.</li> <li>• Bring your upper half up and place your forearms on the floor.</li> <li>• Spread your fingers wide</li> <li>• Roll back the shoulders.</li> <li>• Press your hands down, inhale, and straighten your arms.</li> <li>• Draw your spine backward.</li> <li>• Relax and take 3 breaths.</li> </ul>	

<b>BENEFITS</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Improves posture.</li> <li>• Strengthens the spine, arms, and wrists.</li> <li>• Stretches the chest, lungs, shoulders, and belly.</li> </ul>

## Downward- Facing Dog

Adho Mukha Śvānāsana



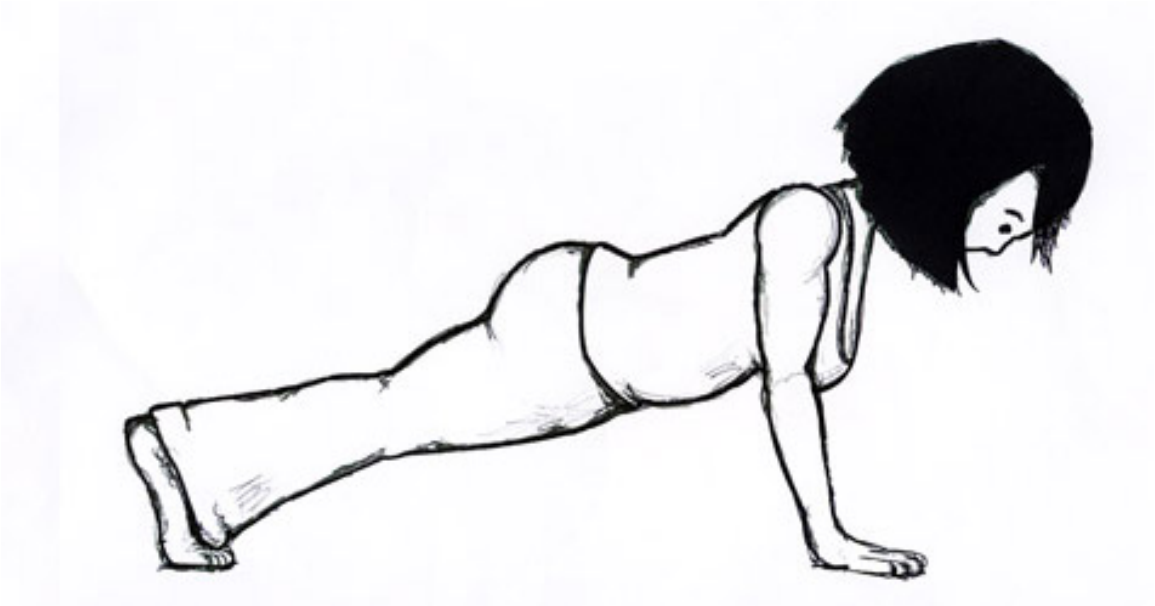
(McDougall, 2015)

MENTOR INSTRUCTIONS	NUMBER OF BREATHS
<b>Standing</b>	<b>5</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Lay face down on the floor.</li> <li>• Place hands at the center of your chest.</li> <li>• Press up on all fours, keeping your hands and feet where they are.</li> <li>• Inhale, tuck your toes under, and lift your hips up toward the sky.</li> <li>• Straighten your knees, and draw your thighs back.</li> <li>• Bring your heels toward the floor.</li> </ul>	

<b>BENEFITS</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Calms the brain</li> <li>• Assists to relieve stress and depression.</li> <li>• Energizes the body.</li> <li>• Stretches shoulders, hamstrings, calves, and hands.</li> <li>• Strengthens arms and legs.</li> <li>• Relieves menstrual discomfort.</li> <li>• Relives headache, sleep deprivation, back pain, and fatigue.</li> </ul>

## Plank

Phalakāsana



(McDougall, 2015)

MENTOR INSTRUCTIONS	NUMBER OF BREATHS
<b>Balance</b>	<b>5</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Begin on your hands and knees on the mat.</li> <li>• Wrists are directly under your shoulders.</li> <li>• Extend your legs straight out behind you, remember to tuck your toes under.</li> <li>• Look straight down at the floor, remaining aligned.</li> <li>• Bring your belly in towards your spine.</li> <li>• Hold pose and breath.</li> </ul>	

<b>BENEFITS</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Strengthens arms, wrists, and spine.</li> <li>• Tightens abdomen.</li> </ul>

## CHAPTER FIVE: EVALUATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This chapter provides a summary of the present project and discusses some practical and theoretical implications that stem from this research. The limitations of the project will be revisited and will be followed by a discussion of how these limitations can be used as considerations for future research. This project began with a comprehensive examination of pertinent literature surrounding the use of yoga with adolescent populations. Throughout the literature review, it became obvious that yoga practice with adolescent populations has numerous personal, physical, and mental health benefits.

The main purpose of this project was to develop a practical, age and gender appropriate, mindfulness yoga handbook for Go Girls mentors to help in promoting the development of self-regulation and transitional skills among adolescent females (age 11 to 14, grades 5 to 8) within the program. *Go Girls: Healthy Bodies, Health Minds, A Specialized Yoga Handbook For Mentors* (a) provides opportunities for mentors to assist adolescent females transition with ease, (b) provides mentors with a calming practice that fosters self-regulation, and (c) provides adolescent females with an alternative form of physical activity that supports personal, physical, and psychological health.

### Implications for Practice

The handbook was created for mentors to implement yoga practice into each mentoring session as a way to enhance adolescent females self-regulation development and to assist during transitions back to regular school structures. The intentions of the five-session yoga program were to provide mentors with simple, easy to follow lesson plans to use nearing the end of each session to encourage mindfulness among the group.

The handbook is not intended to be a comprehensive resource that replaces the

typical Go Girls mentoring sessions. Rather, the handbook activities are encouraged to support and to be incorporated into each session, particularly nearing the end of each session. Mentors can benefit from reviewing this handbook as it provides relevant information and basic instruction in the area of incorporating alternative forms of physical activity with adolescent females. Mentors can also benefit from reviewing this handbook for the sole purpose of exploring their own mindfulness and yoga practice.

The handbook provides relevant knowledge regarding yoga practice with adolescent populations, makes connections toward the importance of implementing yoga in school contexts, and lastly, discusses what mindful yoga is and why it should be applied within the Go Girls program. The handbook provides mentors with five session plans, all of which have easy to follow visual cues and instructions. The specialized design of the handbook offers practical and relevant movements for mentors to use with their mentees. The handbook also provides a peer-led exercise and reflection component. The purpose behind the peer-led exercise is for the girls to consciously build metacognitive awareness and self-regulation by planning a personalized yoga sequence, monitoring how they are doing during the yoga sequence, and evaluating what they learned from this experience. This is important because it fosters critical thinking and self-awareness on the “why, how, and so what” of yoga practice.

Lastly, community service agencies such as Big Brothers Big Sisters (the creators of the Go Girls program) would be able to directly benefit from the knowledge and relevance of the exercises in the handbook. The handbook would act as a supplementary element within the Go Girls program. The handbook could also be recommended to parents in order to gain greater knowledge regarding the importance of building self-

regulation, and transitional skills in adolescent females, as well as the benefits of yoga practice for a child's personal, physical, and psychological development.

### **Implications for Theory**

Yoga is an enriching activity that enhances a wide array of developmental aspects in adolescent females (Ross & Thomas, 2010). It enables adolescent females to further acquire self-regulation skills by creating a greater body and mind connection within yoga practice. This consideration epitomizes Albert Bandura's Social Cognitive theory of self-regulation and Barry Zimmerman's Self-Regulation Theory which refer to children having the competence to reflect cognitively towards personal performance within a given task or activity (Zimmerman & Cleary, 2006). *Go Girls: Healthy Bodies, Healthy Minds, A Specialized Yoga Handbook For Mentors* not only takes this theory into practice, but also could be used to investigate these theories' assumptions.

The handbook is designed to incorporate a specialized yoga practice into a typical Go Girls environment. Urie Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Theory refers to influences on five environmental systems (Abrams et al., 2005). These systems are meant to assist in supporting and guiding human growth (Abrams et al., 2005). The microsystem refers to the relationship between children and their immediate environment, in this particular case, the Go girls program. Thus, creating an environment that is safe to engage with others and explore the world around them is vital towards providing adolescent females with the essential tools to further their development and gain a sense of self (Leonard, 2011; Leu, 2008; Sneed et al., 2006).



### **Future Research**

There are several potential avenues for future research in the area of mindfulness yoga practice and its benefit on adolescent populations; however, to remain within the aim of this study, this section will focus these considerations to those related to the limitations of this additional resource to the Go Girls program.

Future research could involve implementing the specialized yoga handbook into the Go Girls program. This would provide greater accountability. Once implementation of the handbook is complete, contacting mentors to determine the usefulness, practical application, and clarity of the five-session exercises should be considered. Furthermore, comments from the mentors regarding the handbook could be gathered in order to ensure that the handbook meets the needs of both mentors and mentees. These comments from mentors would confirm that the handbook does exactly what it was designed to do and in relation increase its credibility and validity (Creswell, 2008, O'Reilly et al., 2013).

Alongside gathering mentor feedback, another group that could be asked to review the handbook are the adolescent female participants. The mentees could provide feedback on their experiences with the specialized yoga practice. This approach would be advantageous to the handbook because the mentees could provide greater insight into how to enhance the exercises to meet the needs of all girls within the program. Further consideration toward adaptation of yoga poses should also be questioned.

Understanding the limitations of a specialized yoga handbook for adolescent females highlights the intricacies of the proposed problem and emphasizes the need for further research in this area of study.

## Conclusion

There were three major objectives for this project: a) to provide opportunities for mentors to assist adolescent females through transitional periods; b) to assist mentors in the planning and execution of a calm and effective program that promotes self-regulation; and c) to support the use of yoga within adolescent populations, as an additional element in a child's life for personal, physical, and mental health. To achieve these goals, *Go Girls: Healthy Bodies, Health Minds, A Specialized Yoga Handbook For Mentors* was crafted. Providing adolescent females with alternative forms of physical activity, such as mindfulness yoga practice, can offer girls with greater opportunities to make informed decisions in their daily lives and further considerations for their future. It is important to restate that this handbook has not yet been tested; however, I believe this mindfulness yoga resource designed for adolescent females will foster the development of skills related to well-being.

## References

- Abrams, K., Theberge, S., & Karan, O. (2005). Children and adolescents who are depressed: An ecological approach. *Professional School Counselling*, 2(1), 284–292.
- Bandura, A. (1991). Social cognitive theory of self-regulation. *Organizational Behavior & Human Decision Processes*, 50(2), 248–287.
- Benavides, S., & Caballero, J. (2009). Ashtanga yoga for children and adolescents for weight management and psychological well being: An uncontrolled open pilot study. *Complementary Therapies in Clinical Practice*, 15(2), 110–114.  
doi:10.1016/j.ctcp.2008.12.004
- Big Brothers Big Sisters. (2011). *Go Girls! Group mentoring*. Retrieved from <http://www.bigbrothersbigsisters.ca/en/home/mentoringprograms/gogirls.aspx>
- Bluth, K., & Blanton, P. (2014). Mindfulness and self-compassion: Exploring pathways to adolescent emotional well-being. *Journal of Child & Family Studies*, 23(7), 1298–1309. doi:10.1007/s10826-013-9830-2
- Brown, D., & Leledaki, A. (2010). Eastern movement forms as body-self transforming cultural practices in the west: Toward a sociological perspective. *Cultural Sociology*, 4(1), 123–154. doi:10.1177/1749975509356866
- Canadian Society for Exercise Physiology. (2012). *Canadian physical activity and sedentary behaviour guidelines handbook*. Retrieved from <http://www.csep.ca/english/view.asp?x=804>
- Conboy, L., Noggle, J., Frey, J., Kudesia, R., & Khalsa, S. (2013). Qualitative evaluation of a high school yoga program: Feasibility and perceived benefits. *Explore (NY)*, 9(3),

171–180. doi:10.1016/j.explore.2013.02.001

Creswell, J. W. (2008). *Educational research: Planning, conducting, and evaluating quantitative and qualitative research* (3rd ed.). Upper Saddle River, NJ: Pearson Prentice Hall.

Douglass, L. (2010) Yoga in the public schools: Diversity, democracy and the use of critical thinking in educational debate. *Religions & Education*, 37(2), 162–174. doi:10.1080/15507394.2010.486370

Elo, S. & Kyngas, H. (2008). The qualitative content analysis process. *Journal of Advanced Nursing* 62(1), 107–115. doi: 10.1111/j.1365-2648.2007.04569.x

Ergas, O. (2013). Two mind-altering curriculums: Contemplation, mindfulness, and the educational question whether “to think or not to think?” *Journal of Transformative Education*, 11(4), 275–296. doi:10.1177/1541344614540334

Fathima, M., Sasikumar, N., & Roja, M. (2014). Enhancing teaching competency of graduate teacher trainees through metacognitive intervention strategies. *American Journal of Applied Psychology*, 2(1), 27–32.

Finnan, C. (2015). Getting on the mat: Teachers and students engaging in yoga together. *Childhood Education*, 91(6), 463–468.

Handley, M., & Earls, J. (2014). Minding the gap: Incorporating mindfulness to facilitate students’ soft-skills development. *NACE Journal*, 75(1), 25–29.

Hussain, D. (2015). Meta-cognition in mindfulness: A conceptual analysis. *Psychological Thought*, 8(2), 132–141. doi:10.5964/psyct.v8i2.139

Isakov, E. (2012). *Stellar kids yoga: Inspire. Motivate. Create*. Retrieved from <http://www.stellarkidsyoga.com>

- Khalsa, S. B., & Butzer, B. (2016). Yoga in school settings: A research review. *Annals of the New York Academy of Sciences*, 1373(1), 45–55. doi:10.1111/nyas.13025
- Krippendorff K. (1980) Content Analysis: An Introduction to its Methodology. Sage Publications, Newbury Park.
- Leonard, J. (2011) Using Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Theory to understand community partnerships: A historical case study of one urban high school. *Urban Education* 46(5), 987–1010.
- Leu, J. C. (2008). Early childhood music education in Taiwan: An ecological systems perspective. *Arts Education Policy Review*, 109(3), 17–26.  
doi:10.3200/AEPR.109.3.17-26
- Lippold, M. A., Powers, C. J., Syvertsen, A. K., Feinberg, M. E., & Greenberg, M. T. (2012). The timing of school transitions and early adolescent problem behavior. *Journal of Early Adolescence*, 33(6), 821–844. doi:10.1177/0272431612468317
- Lovrenovic, M., Grujic, I., Gojkovic, V., & Grujic, R. (2016). Physical activities of adolescents and the level of knowledge on the impact of their diet on their overall health. *Quality of Life* 7(1-2), 17–23. doi:10.7251/QOL16017L
- MacGillivray, U. (2014). *Shanti hot yoga: Yoga for youth*. Retrieved from <http://www.shantihotyoga.ca>
- McDougall, M. (2015). *Joy peace and health: The yoga journal of Mona McDougall*. Retrieved from <http://joypeaceandhealth.com/2011/pose-guide/boat-navasana/>
- McGee, A. (2015). *Power Yoga Canada: PYS St. Catharines*. Retrieved from <http://www.poweryogacanada.com/index.php/studio/st-catharines>

- McKenzie, T. (2001). Promoting physical activity in youth: Focus on middle school environments. *Quest: National Association for Physical Education in Higher Education*, 53(3), 326–334. doi:10.1080/00336297.2001.10491749
- Miller, S., Herman-Stahl, M., Fishbein, D., Lavery, B., Johnson, M., & Markovits, L. (2014). Use of formative research to develop a yoga curriculum for high-risk youth: Implementation considerations, *Advances in School Mental Health Promotion*, 7(3), 171–183. doi:10.1080/1754730X.2014.916496
- O’ Reilly M., Ronzoni, P., & Dogra, N. (2013). *Research with children: Theory & practice*. Los Angeles, CA: SAGE.
- Ontario Ministry of Education. (2015). *The Ontario curriculum, grades 1-8: Health and physical education*. Toronto, Canada: Author.
- Ontario Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care. (2016). *Initial report on public health: Physical activity index*. Retrieved from [http://www.health.gov.on.ca/en/public/publications/pubhealth/init\\_report/pai.html](http://www.health.gov.on.ca/en/public/publications/pubhealth/init_report/pai.html)
- Ross, A., & Thomas, S. (2010). The health benefits of yoga and exercise: A review of comparison studies. *Journal of Alternative & Complementary Medicine*, 16(1), 3–12. doi:10.1089/acm.2009.0044
- Santas, D. (2016). *Beyond ‘Namaste’: The benefits of yoga in schools*. Retrieved from <http://www.cnn.com/2016/05/10/health/yoga-in-schools/index.html>
- Shapiro, S., Lyons, K., Miller, R., Butler, B., Vieten, C., & Zelazo, P. (2014). Contemplation in the classroom: A new direction for improving childhood education. *Educational Psychology Review*. 27(1), 1–30. doi: 10.1007/s10648-014-9265-3

- Sneed, J. R., Whitbourne, S. K., & Culang, M. E. (2006). Trust, identity, and ego integrity: Modeling Erikson's core stages over 34 years. *Journal of Adult Development, 13*(3), 148–157. doi:10.1007/s10804-007-9026-3
- Spinazzola, J., Rhodes, A., Emerson, D., Earle, E., & Monroe, K. (2011) Application of yoga in residential treatment of traumatized youth. *Journal of the American Psychiatric, 17*(6), 431–444. doi: 10.1177/1078390311418359
- Subedi, S. (2014). Exploring different types of hatha yoga for patients with cancer. *Clinical Journal of Oncology Nursing, 18*(5), 586–590. doi:10.1188/14.CJON.
- Subramaniam, P., & Silverman, S. (2007). Middle school students' attitudes toward physical education, *Teaching and Teacher Education, 23*(5), 602–611.
- Waechter, R., & Wekerle, C. (2015), Promoting resilience among maltreated youth using meditation, yoga, tai chi and qigong: A scoping review of the literature. *Child & Adolescent Social Work Journal, 32*(1), 17–31. doi: 10.1007/s10560-014-0356-2
- Weller, S. (2014). *Complete yoga workbook: A practical approach to healing common ailments with yoga*. London, UK: Collins & Brown.
- White, L. (2012). Reducing stress in school-age girls through mindful yoga. *Journal of Pediatric Health Care, 26*(1), 45–56. doi:10.1016/j.pedhc.2011.01.002
- Whitehead, S., & Biddle, S. (2008). Adolescent girls' perceptions of physical activity: A focus group study. *European Physical Education Review, 14*(2), 243–262. doi: 10.1177/1356336X08090708
- Zimmerman, B. J., & Cleary, T. K. (2006). Adolescents' development of personal agency: The role of self-efficacy beliefs and self-regulatory skill. In F. Pajares T. Urdan (Eds.), *Self-efficacy beliefs of adolescents* (pp. 45–69). Greenwich, CT: Information Age.